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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS
PACOM FOR FPA (HUSO)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN VIOLENCE UPDATE: NEW BOMB ATTACK; NEW
POLITICAL PARTY?

Classified By: DCM Alexander A. Arvizu. Reason. 1.4 (b)

11. (C) Summary: On May 10 a bomb exploded outside a tea shop in the far southern province of Pattani, killing one soldier and three civilians. The type of bomb and tactic of targeting security forces at a location they are known to frequent is similar to past attacks. However, the reported placement of the device by a female accomplice -- the second reported instance this month -- is a worrisome development. Separately, a prominent southern Muslim leader announced the formation of a new "Muslim" political party focused on the southern border provinces. It is unlikely that this party will be organized in time to take part in the next election. End Summary

LATEST BOMB IN SOUTH

12. (SBU) On May 10, a bomb placed in the front basket of a stolen motorbike detonated in front of a roadside tea shop in the far southern province of Pattani. The blast killed two civilian women teachers (one of whom was pregnant) and one soldier, and injured 16 others including four soldiers and a police officer. The explosion occurred shortly after a group of soldiers from a locally based 4th Army unit arrived at the tea shop -- a restaurant regularly frequented by Thai security officers.

13. (C) Nikon Chanamphai, the Chief of the Pattani Provincial Defense Office, told Emboffs that the bomb had been triggered by a cell phone and was similar in size to other recent bombs used in the South. (Note: Of late, the use of cell phones to trigger bombs has declined because of the relatively successful effort by the RTG to block the signals of unregistered phones. End Note) A local journalist who covered the explosion agreed that the device was of similar design to other bombs used in the area. However, he told us that witnesses had seen a woman park the motorcycle at the scene before the explosion.

MEANWHILE...A NEW "MUSLIM" POLITICAL PARTY?

14. (SBU) On May 9 Munso Salaeh, a southern political activist and former chairman of the Young Muslim Association of Thailand, announced the formation of a new "Muslim" political party. Munso, who has been a frequent and outspoken critic of U.S. policy in the Middle East, said the party would also welcome Buddhist members. The party, likely to be called Ruam ("united") Thai Muslims, will focus on the problems in the far southern provinces and will reportedly include other prominent Muslim leaders and academics.

15. (C) Comment: The latest bomb attack has many of the hallmarks of the frequent bombings seen in the South over the past two years: a small device, detonated by cell phone, placed where security forces are known to pass. While the bomb and tactics look familiar, the apparent use of a woman to place the device is a worrisome new development. This is the second time this month that a woman was implicated in an attack in the South. On May 6, witnesses reported seeing a woman carrying a suspicious package shortly before a bombing outside a teachers house in Narathiwat. Ethnic Malay women are not usually associated with the violence by Thai authorities, or the larger Thai public. If women are implicated in other attacks, it will certainly further complicate the dynamic in the far south.

16. (C) Comment continued: It is unlikely that a new "Muslim" party will be set up in time to participate in the upcoming general election. Besides timing, the establishment of a Thai "Muslim" party faces other challenges, most notably a diverse Muslim community with widely divergent political concerns. Many southerners view northern Muslims as being more "Thai" than Muslim, while Bangkok Muslims are often disdainful of their poor, ethnically Malay, southern co-religionists. This is not the first attempt to set up a Thai "Muslim" political party. In 2001, Muslim academic Amnuali Suwannakit's attempt to set up the Santiphap ("peace") Party failed quickly from a lack of support. A similar fate probably awaits this latest attempt to establish a unified Muslim political vehicle in Thailand. End Comment

